BANG CHAN

FOREWORD

114 The Cornell Thailand Project, like other Cornell University studies in community development, is a long term investigation in the field of the processes involved in changing cultural behavior in a non-industrialized society. Field research was begun in 1948 in the central plain of Thailand with base line studies of the rice farming community of Bang Chan and its environs. A collaborating staff of Thai and Americans representing different disciplines has continued to work in Thailand at Bang Chan and elsewhere in a series of phases extending to the present.

[113] The first interim report issued by the Project gives a general account of the economic, political and social organization of Bang Chan in 1948-49 together with some material on [128] health and diet (Sharp et al., 1953). Since the circulation of this first interim report was limited, some of the salient characteristics of Bang Chan should be outlined here.

361 Bang Chan is located some twenty roadmiles northeast of Bangkok, the rapidly growing major metropolis and capital of Thailand. The village is between two and three miles west of a small district administrative center and market town, [489] Minburi. A century-old canal and to the north of it a post-war hard surface road connect Minburi and Bangkok so that [491] villagers have easy access to these two centers by boat or bus.

621 In 1954, when data for the present study were still being
162 gathered, the population of Bang Chan was about 1700, divided among about 300 households. Roughly 60 per cent of the house-
[592] holds were made up of independent nuclear families consisting of parents and unmarried children. The average size for all
243 families was 5.7 persons. Rice farming was the main occupa-
241 tion of 80 per cent of all families. The population in 1954 worked and lived on about 2800 acres (7000 rai) of land. With the exception of some 120 acres (300 rai) used for the home
[463] sites and home gardens scattered along the network of canals in the village, all land was devoted to the cultivation of wet
[311] rice. Nutritional density is thus practically the same as population density. Of the rice crop, 60 per cent or more may be sold, the remainder providing seed, feed, and the staple
[132] food of the people. During the wet season and into the cooler
221 dry season, from May or June to February, the growing of the single crop of rice is the main activity. The hot dry season
[517] from March until the rice planting begins again is a period of fiestas, ceremonies, and visiting.

621 The Thai countryside is divided into hamlets, each with
[622] a headman in charge of the thirty to sixty households of the hamlet. Seven such hamlets constitute the Bang Chan community.
[128] (In the Project studies they are identified by the initials BC and KY followed by a number).